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 INFORMATION REPORT

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1. Radio RIAS had asked all inhabitants of the GDR to cast blank ballots at the plebiscite held between 27 and 29 June 1954. On the Tuesday following the completion of the plebiscite all the chairmen of voting places in Bezirk Potsdam were called and were apparently informed that they had to count blank ballots as votes cast for a peace treaty.
2. The counting of votes was started at 8:00 P.M. on 29 June. The counting procedure was public. All the ballots were put on a table with their reverse sides upward. The votes cast were recorded in three different lists, according as they were given for a peace treaty, for EDC, or whether they were invalid. The chairmen in charge of the voting place picked up each ballot and announced how it had been cast. The votes which had been cast for a peace treaty were placed on a table with their reverse sides facing upward, the votes for EDC and invalid votes were put on separate heaps, the faces of ballots upward. There was no heap for blank votes. This supported the assumption that blank votes were counted as votes cast for a peace treaty. At some voting places the population was informed about this procedure. After the ballots had been counted they were arranged in bundles of 50 and then the ballots were packed and sealed. In some election precincts 15 to 20 percent of all the ballots cast were blank ballots. Some SED members frankly stated that they disapproved of the procedure followed in the counting of votes. Apart from this fraud, the voting procedure was correct.
3. At a meeting held by the "National Front" on 7 July 1954, the plebiscite was again discussed and the first measures to be taken for the general elections on 17 October 1954 were made known. At the conference, it was stated that the number of election precincts was to be increased and the size of these precincts reduced accordingly. It was also stated that no canvassing would be done at the next election because experiences had shown that canvassing of voters had had negative results at the plebiscite. Those who had not cast their votes by a certain hour on election day were only to be gently reminded of their duties. Those who failed to cast their votes were to be considered as having cast negative votes.

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